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AMAR CHITRA KATHA

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# ENTER DRAUPADI

## Mahabharata—11

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# MAHABHARATA

The Mahabharata is the longest epic known to man. It is also what may be called the total epic because, besides being a literary classic, it is a supreme work of philosophy and an exhaustive manual of morals and manners.

The origin of the Mahabharata is shrouded in mystery. Countless scholars have pried into the work to discover the personality of its author, Veda Vyasa, to pin down its date of composition, and to analyse its historical veracity. But doubts still persist on all these counts.

Was it possible for one person to compose over a hundred thousand verses? Handed down by oral tradition, was the Mahabharata written down in 800 B.C. or 600 B.C. or 300 B.C.? Can the levels of Painted Grey Ware and Northern Black Polished Ware, or the names of present-day cities and plains, or the radio-carbon tests of excavated materials, vouch for its historicity? There is no conclusive answer.

The core of the tale – the feud between the princely cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, leading to the eighteen-day-long bloody war – must have had its roots in some real event. The text with its available recensions points to three oral versions : the first as recited by Veda Vyasa himself, the next as recited by his disciple Vaishampayana to Janamejaya, and the third as narrated again by one Sauti, who had heard Vaishampayana's recital. Additions and interpolations must have crept in at various times, till the advent of the printing-press and standard editions.

For this series, we have referred to the following works:

**1. Mahabharata – Sanskrit text with a Hindi translation by Pandit Ramnarayandutt Shastri Pandey ("RAM"), published by Geeta Press, Gorakhpur.**

**2. Shri Mahabharatam – Translated into Malayalam verse, by Kunjikuttan Tampuran, and published by S.P.C.S., Kottayam.**

**3. The Mahabharata – Translated into English prose by Pratap Chandra Roy, and published by Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi.**

**4. The critical edition brought out by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune.**

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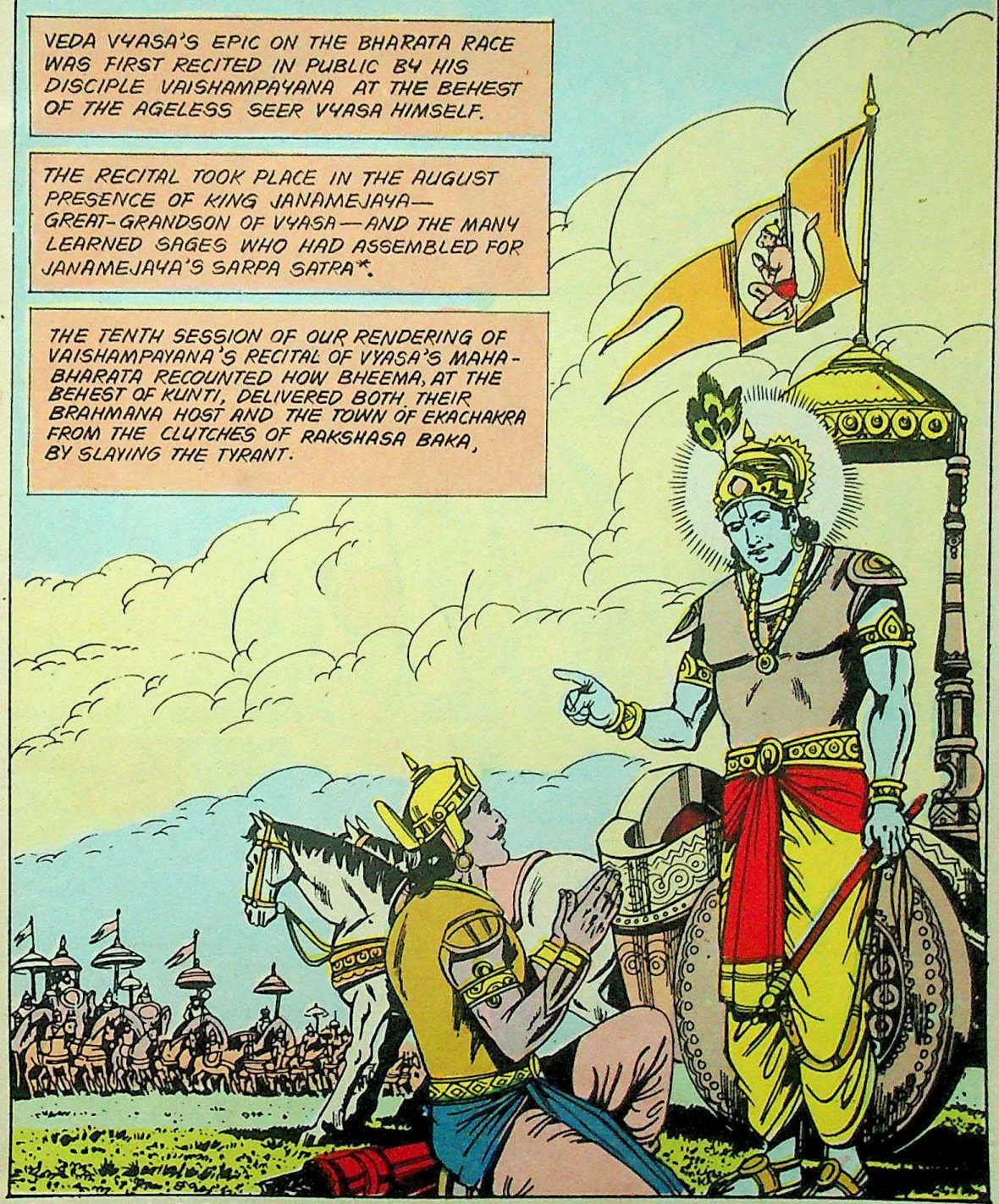
# Mahabharata– 11

## ENTER DRAUPADI

VEDA VYASA'S EPIC ON THE BHARATA RACE WAS FIRST RECITED IN PUBLIC BY HIS DISCIPLE VAISHAMPAYANA AT THE BEHEST OF THE AGELESS SEER VYASA HIMSELF.

THE RECITAL TOOK PLACE IN THE AUGUST PRESENCE OF KING JANAMEJAYA— GREAT-GRANDSON OF VYASA—AND THE MANY LEARNED SAGES WHO HAD ASSEMBLED FOR JANAMEJAYA'S SARPA SATRA*.

THE TENTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S MAHA-BHARATA RECOUNTED HOW BHEEMA, AT THE BEHEST OF KUNTI, DELIVERED BOTH THEIR BRAHMANA HOST AND THE TOWN OF EKACHAKRA FROM THE CLUTCHES OF RAKSHASA BAKA, BY SLAYING THE TYRANT.



*12-YEAR-LONG SNAKE SACRIFICE

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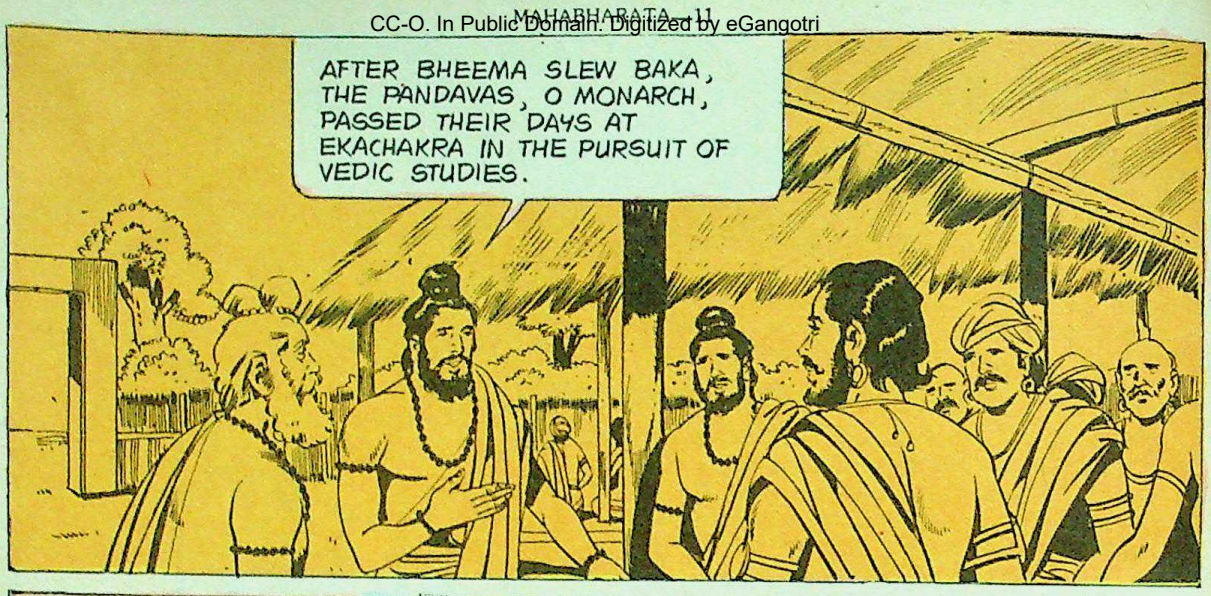


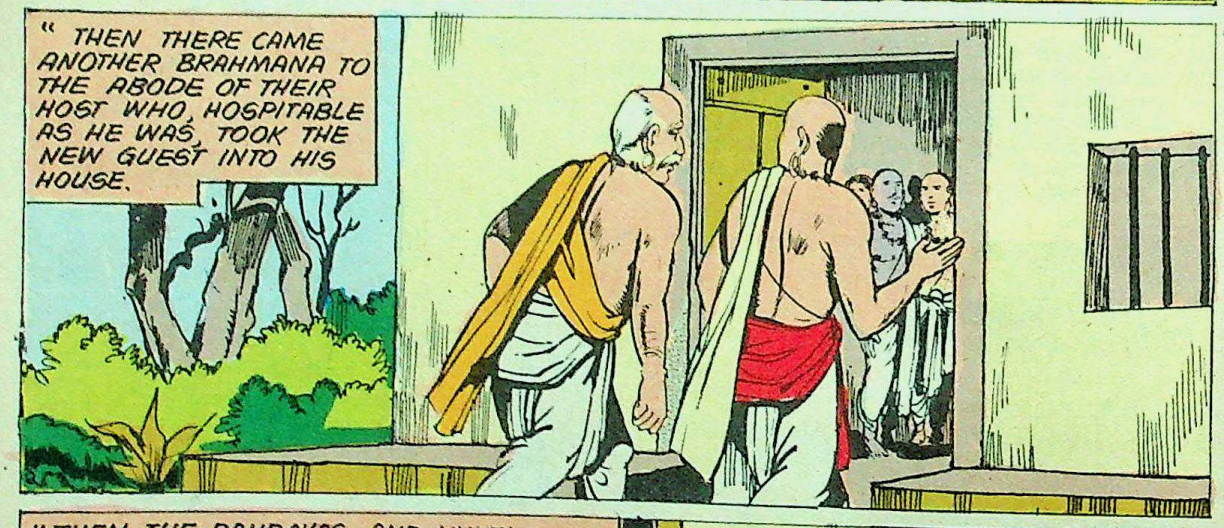


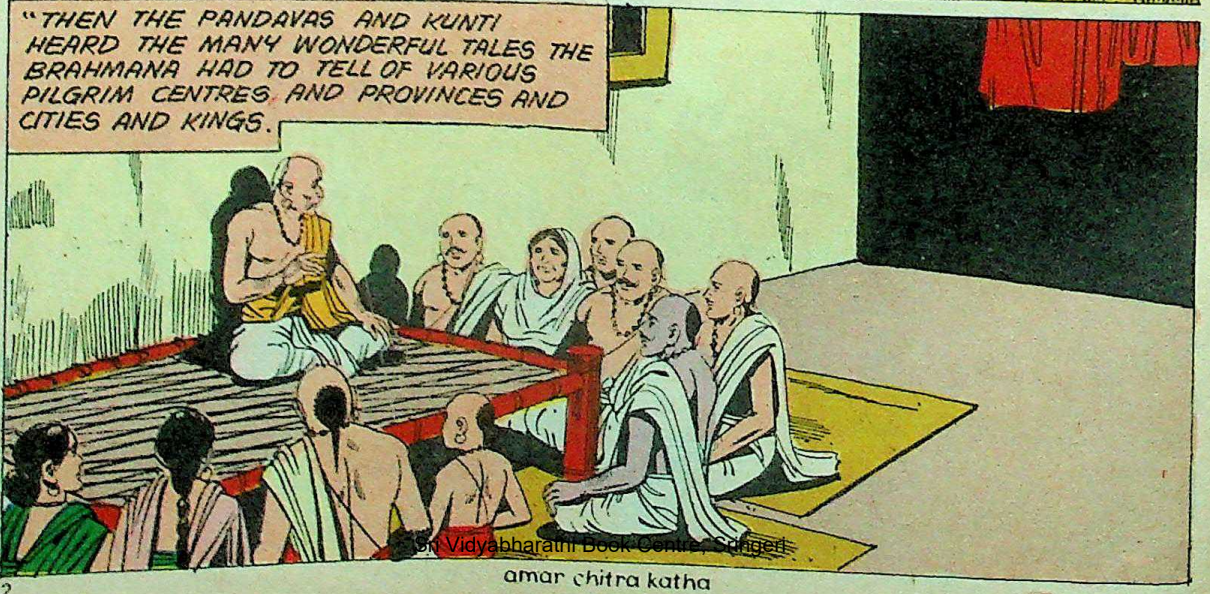
"THEN THE PANDAVAS AND KUNTI HEARD THE MANY WONDERFUL TALES THE BRAHMANA HAD TO TELL OF VARIOUS PILGRIM CENTRES AND PROVINCES AND CITIES AND KINGS.

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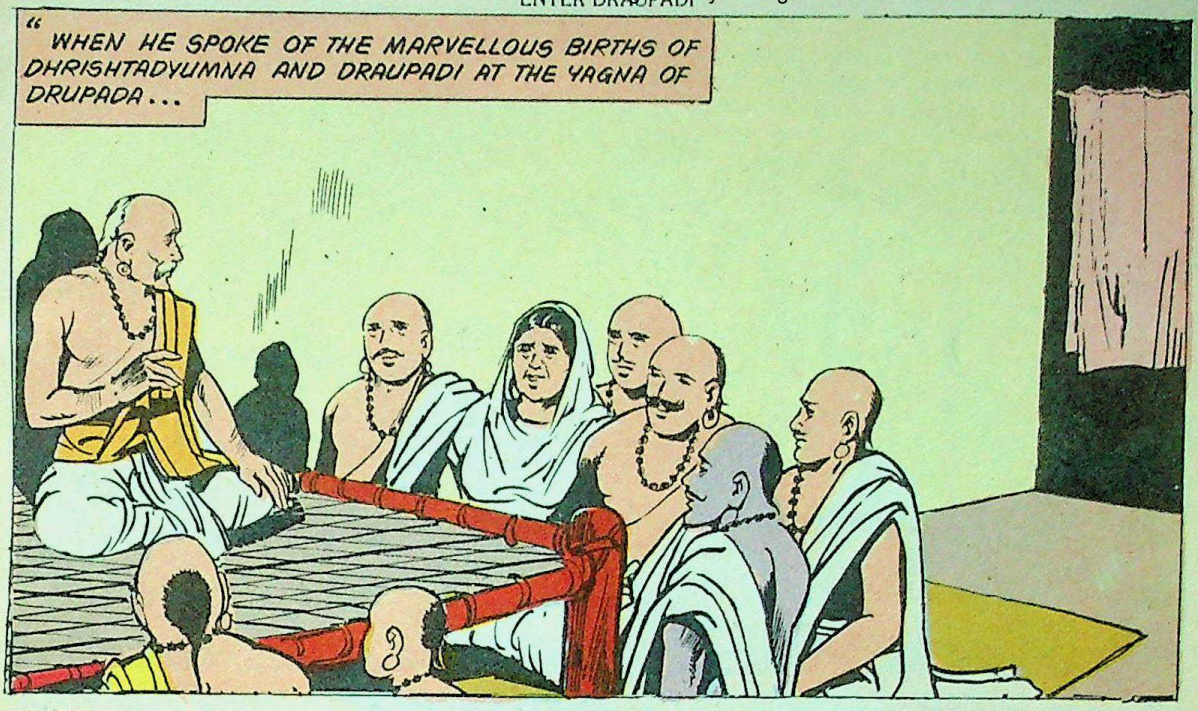


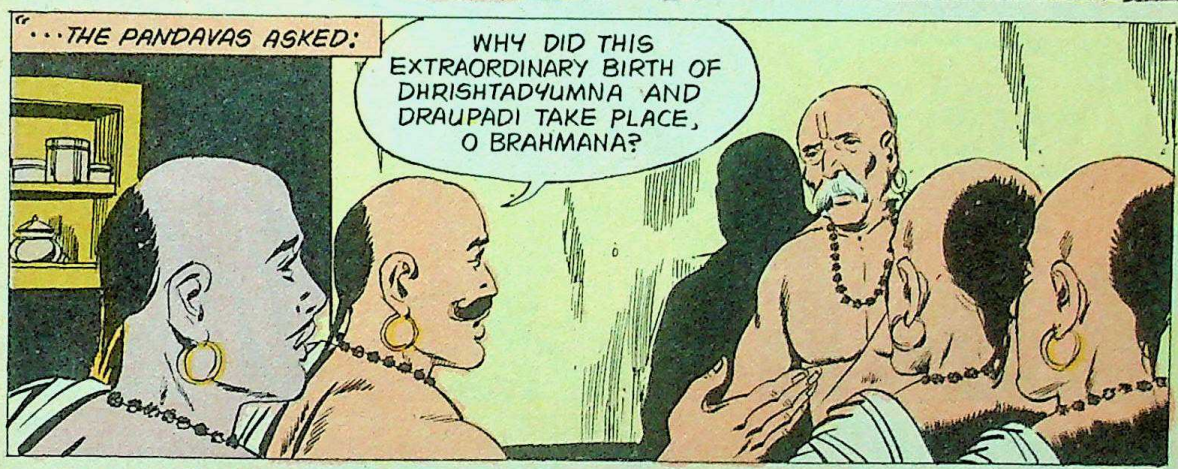


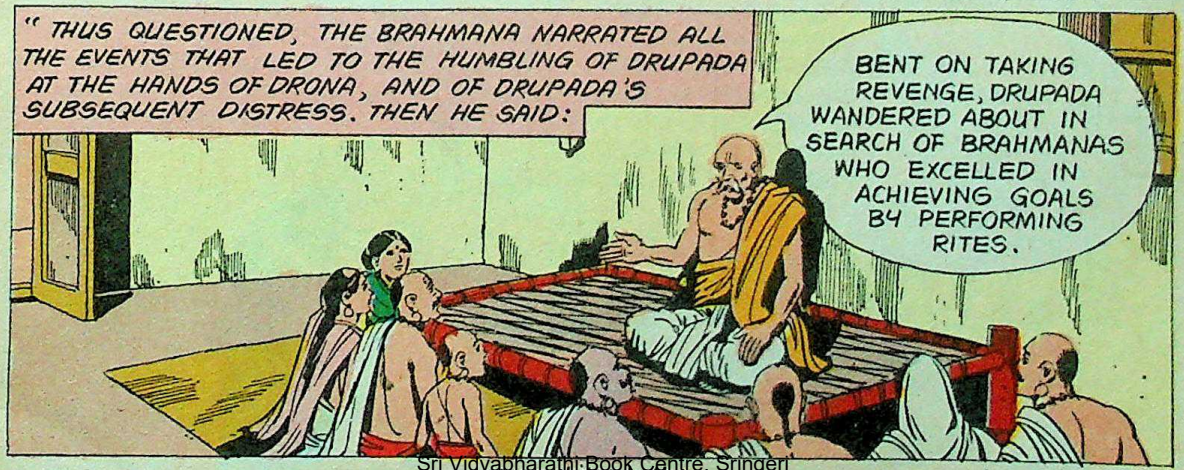
" THUS QUESTIONED, THE BRAHMANA NARRATED ALL THE EVENTS THAT LED TO THE HUMBLING OF DRUPADA AT THE HANDS OF DRONA, AND OF DRUPADA'S SUBSEQUENT DISTRESS. THEN HE SAID:
BENT ON TAKING REVENGE, DRUPADA WANDERED ABOUT IN SEARCH OF BRAHMANAS WHO EXCELLED IN ACHIEVING GOALS BY PERFORMING RITES.

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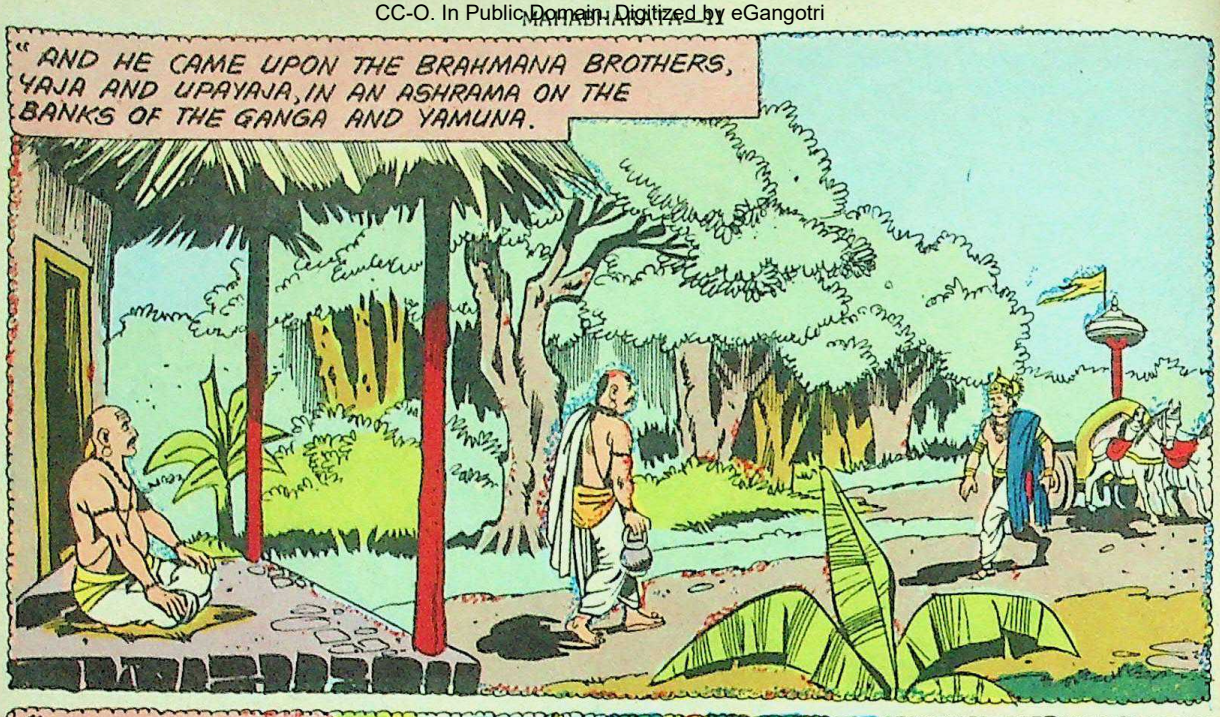
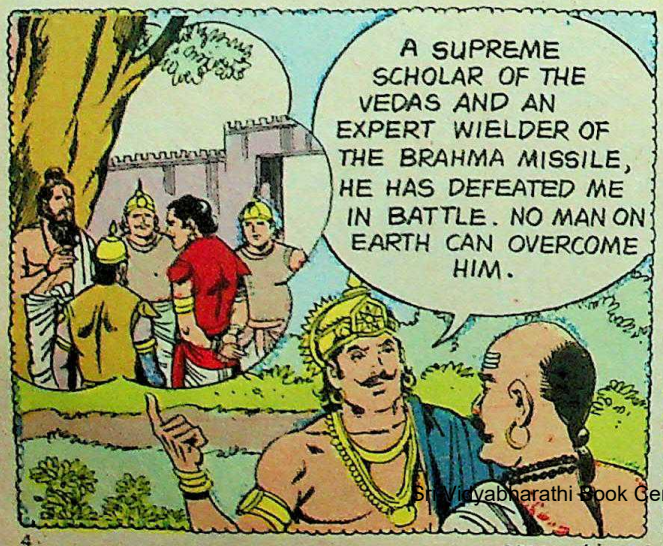
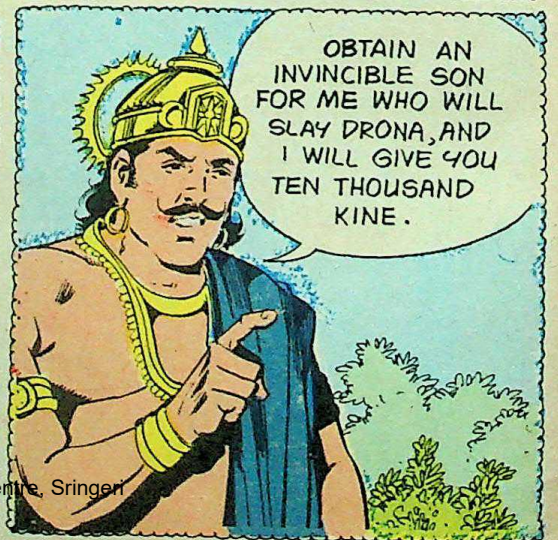



A SUPREME SCHOLAR OF THE VEDAS AND AN EXPERT WIELDER OF THE BRAHMA MISSILE, HE HAS DEFEATED ME IN BATTLE. NO MAN ON EARTH CAN OVERCOME HIM.

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"YAJA AGREED AND DRUPADA PROCURED ALL THAT WAS NEEDED. TOWARDS THE END OF THE RITES, YAJA SAID TO DRUPADA'S QUEEN:
COME, DAUGHTER-IN-LAW OF PRISHATA. TWIN CHILDREN ARE TO BE YOURS.
"THE QUEEN CRIED OUT:
PLEASE WAIT FOR ME A WHILE, O YAJA, TILL I PURIFY MYSELF TO RECEIVE THE SANCTIFIED OFFERING.
MY FACE AND MY BODY NEED ABLUTION. O WAIT FOR ME A WHILE.
"BUT YAJA SAID:
THIS OFFERING PREPARED BY YAJA AND SANCTIFIED BY UPAYAJA WILL BEAR FRUIT WHETHER YOU ARE PRESENT OR NOT.
"AND HE POURED THE OFFERING INTO THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE.


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"THEN THERE SPRANG FROM THE FIRE AN AWESOME YOUTH RADIANT LIKE A CELESTIAL AND SPLENDIDLY ARRAYED WHO AS SOON AS HE CAME FORTH...

"...ASCENDED A CHARIOT...

"...AND DROVE IT AROUND. THEN A VOICE FROM THE REALMS ABOVE SAID:

THIS PRINCE IS BORN TO KILL DRONA, END THE SORROW OF THE KING AND BRING FAME TO THE PANCHALAS.

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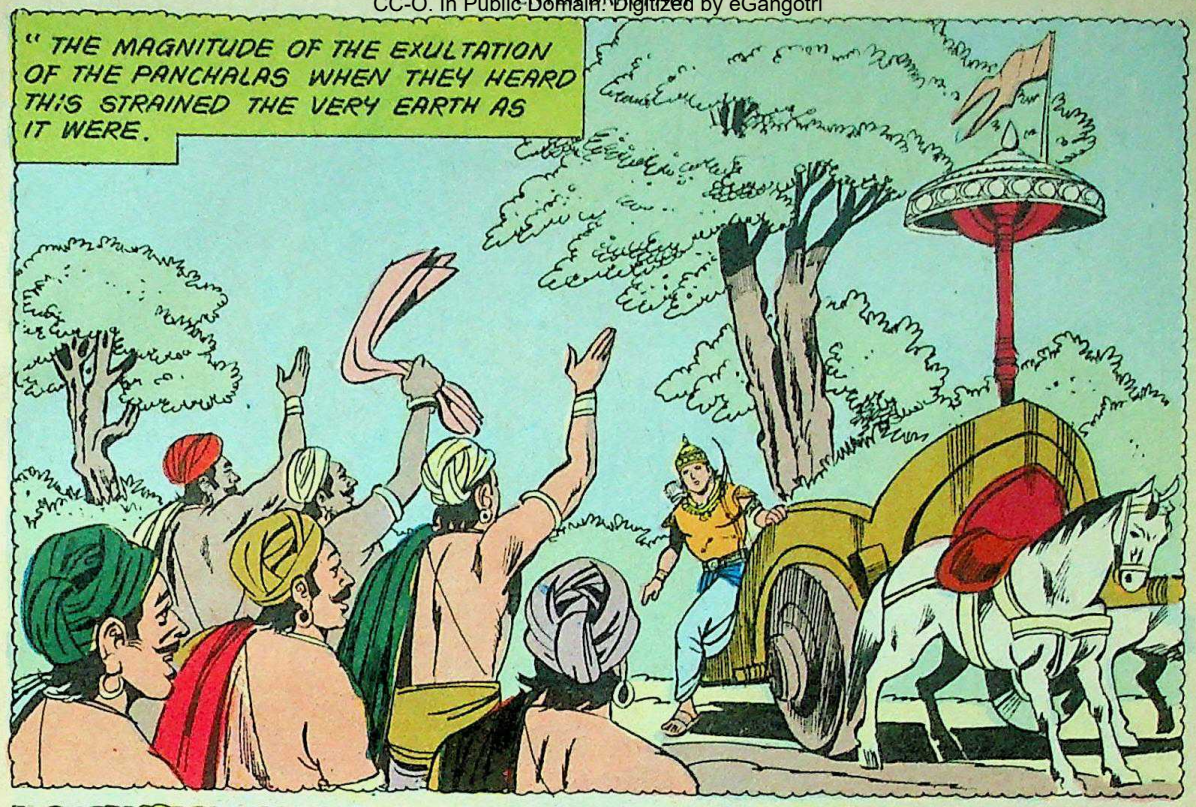


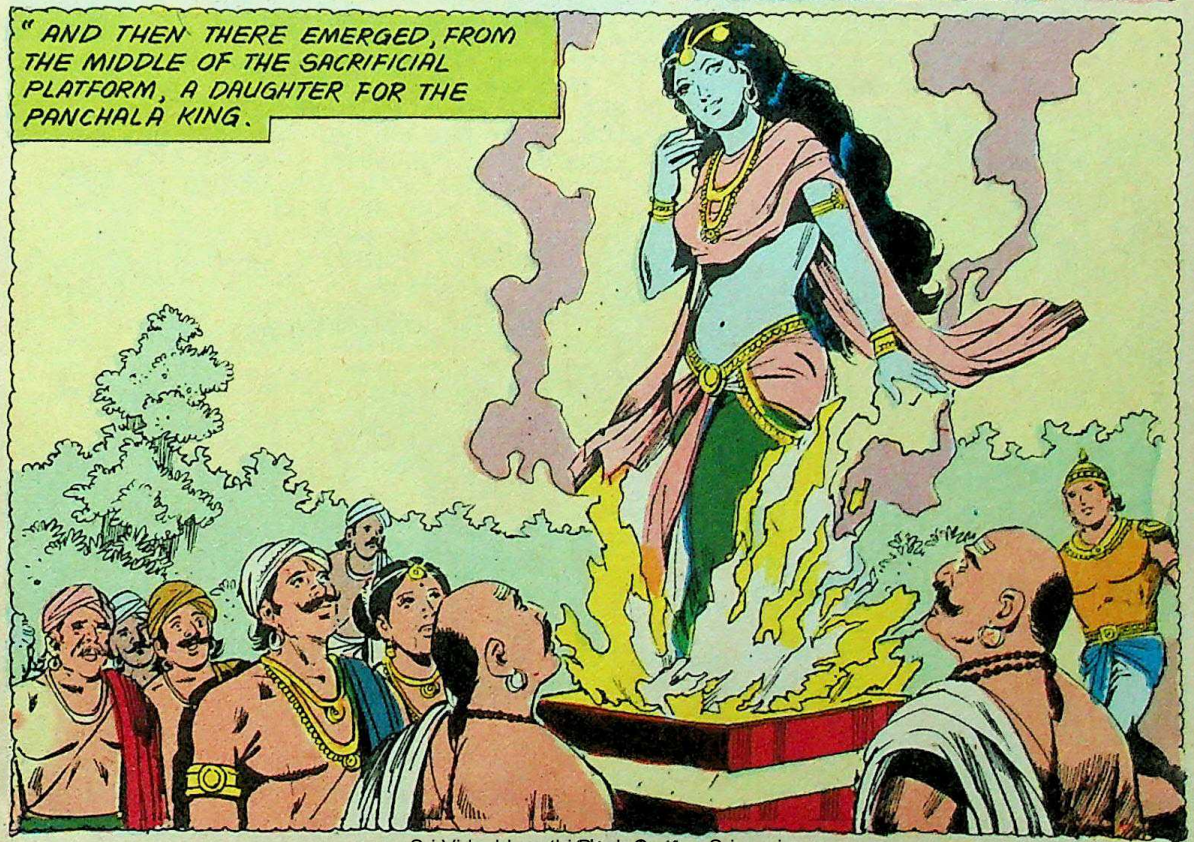


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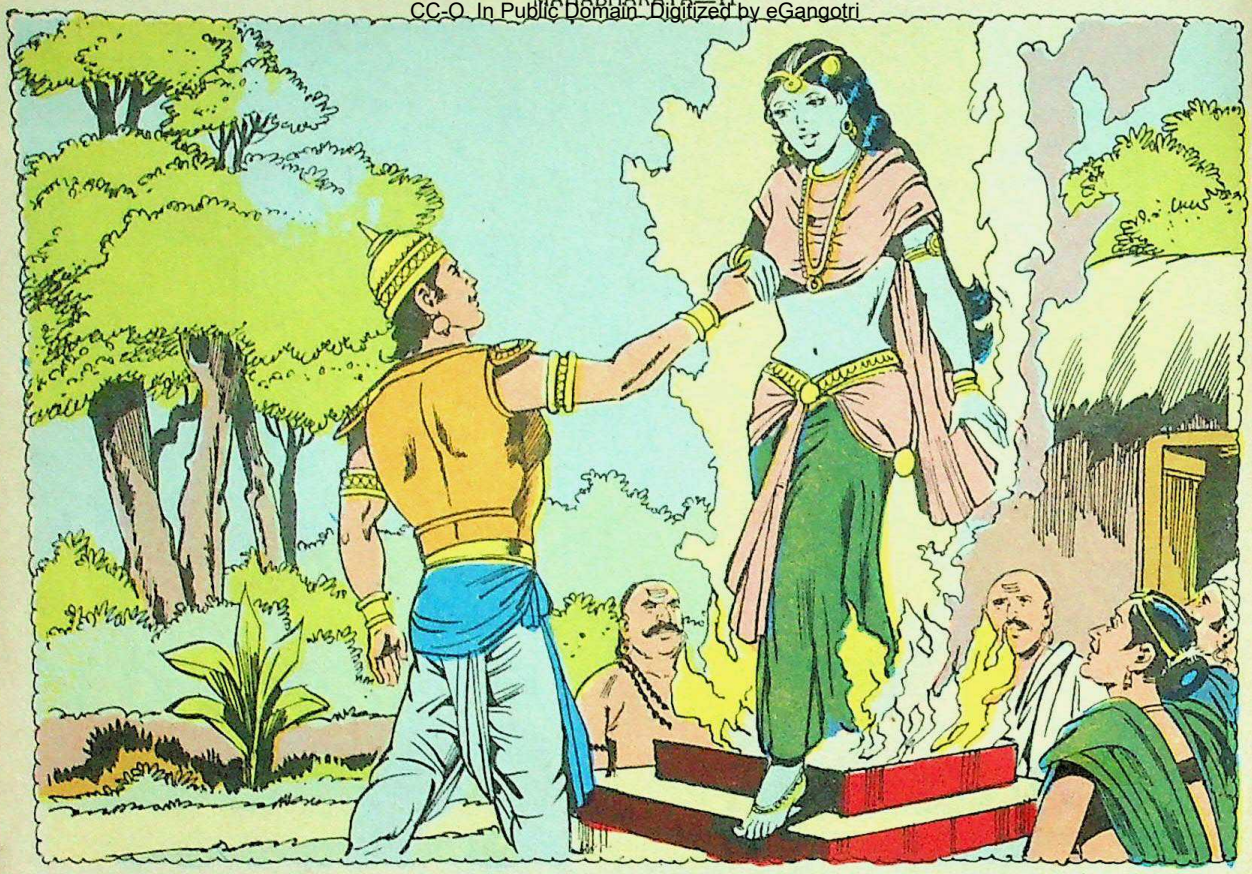

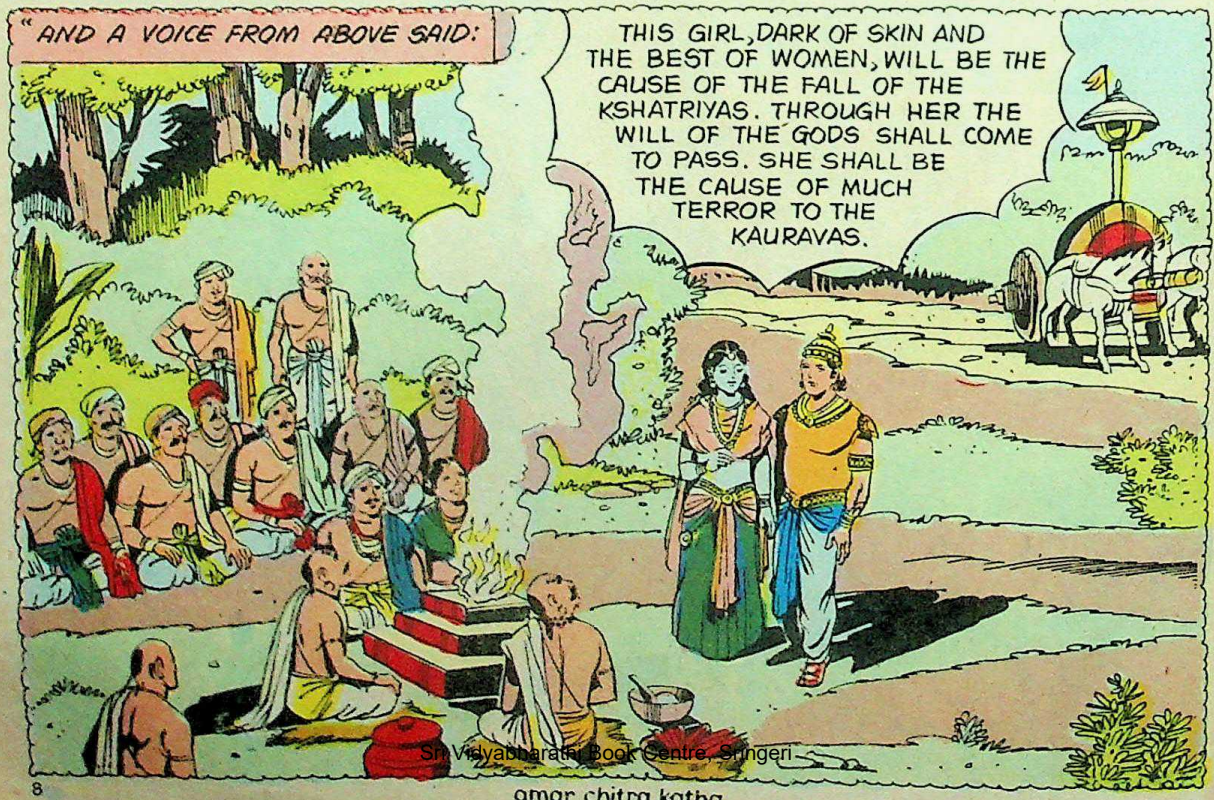
"AND A VOICE FROM ABOVE SAID:
THIS GIRL, DARK OF SKIN AND THE BEST OF WOMEN, WILL BE THE CAUSE OF THE FALL OF THE KSHATRIYAS. THROUGH HER THE WILL OF THE GODS SHALL COME TO PASS. SHE SHALL BE THE CAUSE OF MUCH TERROR TO THE KAURAVAS.

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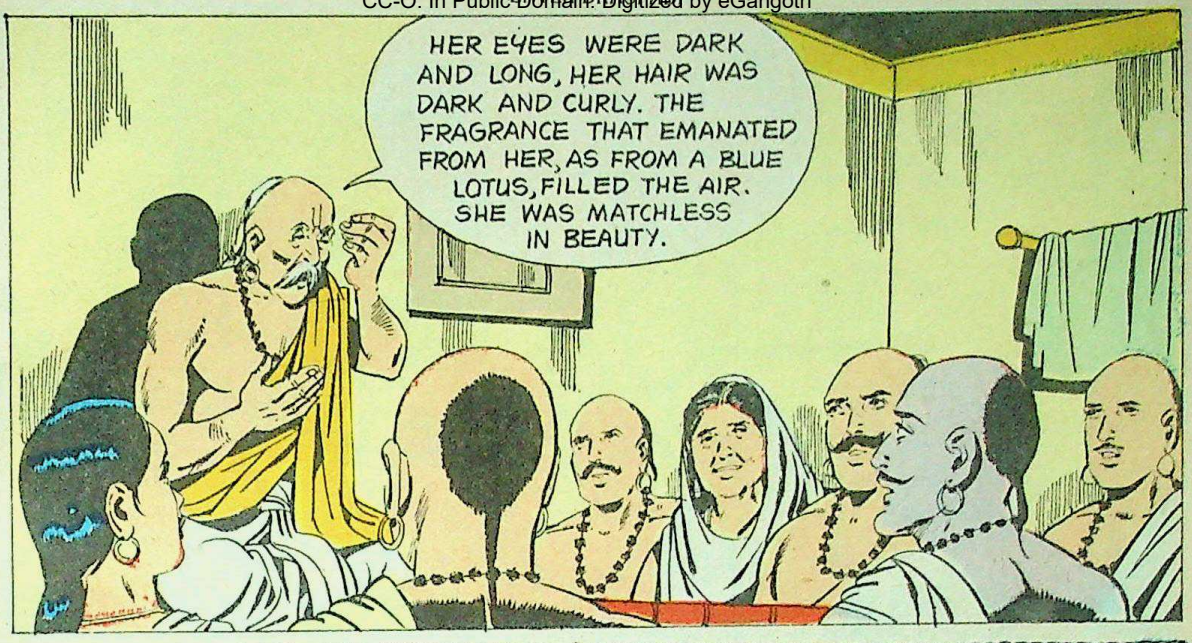
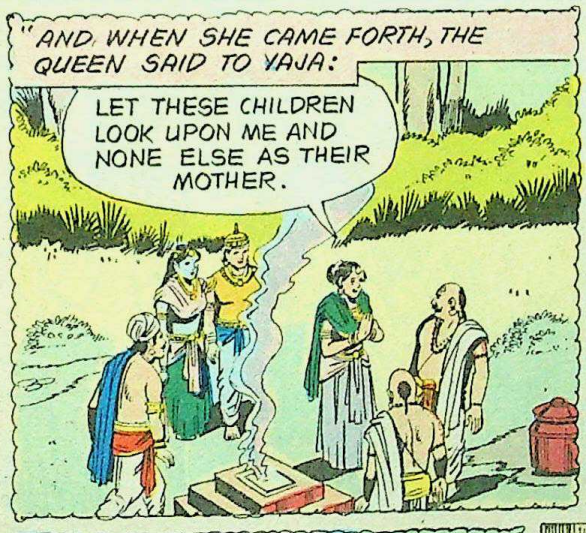
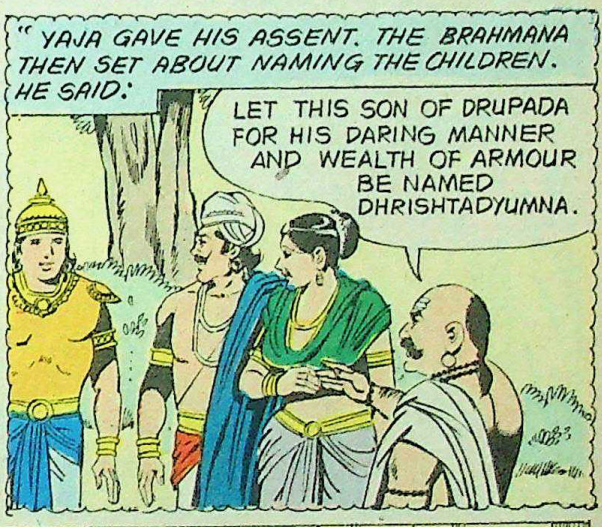
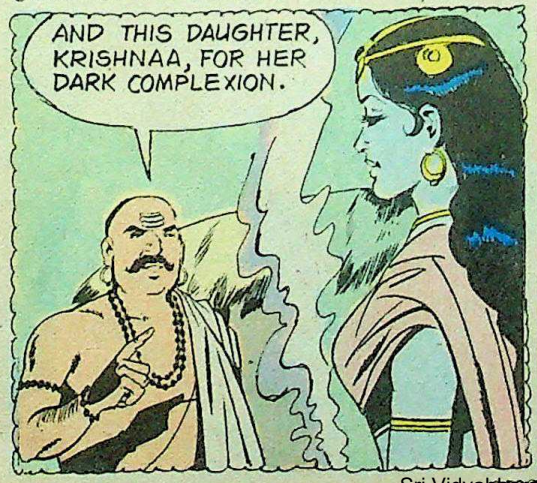
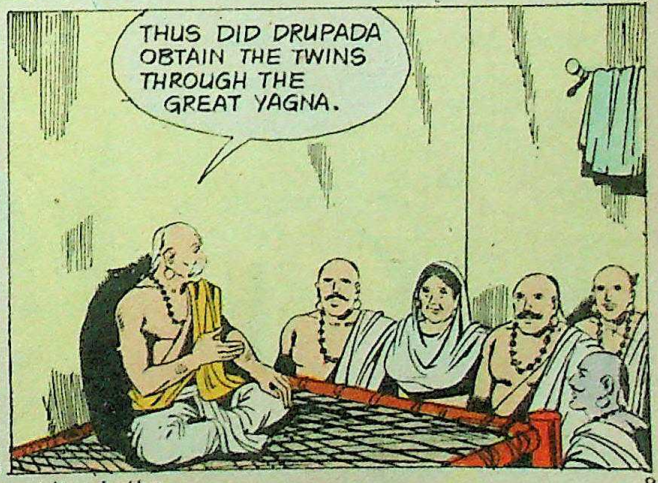

HER EYES WERE DARK AND LONG, HER HAIR WAS DARK AND CURLY. THE FRAGRANCE THAT EMANATED FROM HER, AS FROM A BLUE LOTUS, FILLED THE AIR. SHE WAS MATCHLESS IN BEAUTY.





"YAJA GAVE HIS ASSENT. THE BRAHMANA THEN SET ABOUT NAMING THE CHILDREN. HE SAID:
LET THIS SON OF DRUPADA FOR HIS DARING MANNER AND WEALTH OF ARMOUR BE NAMED DHRISHTADYUMNA.



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SOON AFTER THIS DRONA, IN DEFERENCE TO DESTINY, TOOK DHRISHTADYUMNA TO HIS ABODE AND INSTRUCTED HIM IN THE SCIENCE OF ARMS THUS SAFEGUARDING HIS OWN REPUTATION.

"SMITTEN BY ALL THAT THEY HAD HEARD, THE SONS OF KUNTI, THOSE MIGHTY HEROES, BECAME RESTLESS IN MIND.

"OBSERVING THE TROUBLED STATE OF HER SONS...

"...KUNTI SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA:

WE HAVE BEEN LIVING IN THE ABODE OF THIS BRAHMANA FOR MANY DAYS. I THINK IT IS NOT PROPER TO STAY LONG AT ONE PLACE. IF YOU AGREE, LET US PROCEED TO PANCHALA.

"AND YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED:

WHATEVER YOU SAY IS ALWAYS FOR OUR GOOD. YET...

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...I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER MY BROTHERS WILL AGREE TO GO.
"KUNTI SPOKE TO BHEEMA, ARJUNA AND THE TWINS AND THEY GAVE THEIR CONSENT.
"IT WAS THEN THAT MY GURU VYASA VISITED THEM...
"...AND SPOKE TO THEM AT LENGTH ON DUTIES AND PRACTICES. AFTER DISCUSSING THESE AND MANY OTHER TOPICS, HE SAID TO THEM:
IN DAYS GONE BY, A GREAT RISHI HAD AN ACCOMPLISHED AND BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER WHO, BECAUSE OF HER PAST KARMA, COULD NOT OBTAIN A HUSBAND.
"IN DISTRESS SHE TURNED TO AUSTERITIES TO OBTAIN ONE.
"PROPITIATED BY HER PENANCES, LORD SHIVA APPEARED BEFORE HER AND SAID:
I AM WILLING TO GRANT YOU THE BOON YOU DESIRE.


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SHE REQUESTED SHIVA TO GIVE HER A MOST VIRTUOUS HUSBAND AND SHE REPEATED THIS REQUEST AGAIN AND AGAIN.
" THEN SHIVA REPLIED:
YOU SHALL HAVE YOUR FIVE HUSBANDS.
" THE MAID THEN SAID:
O LORD, I DESIRE ONLY ONE HUSBAND.
" SHIVA REPLIED:
FIVE TIMES DID YOU REPEAT YOUR REQUEST FOR A HUSBAND. WHEN YOU TAKE ON THE NEXT LIFE YOU SHALL HAVE FIVE HUSBANDS.
THAT HEAVENLY MAIDEN HAS NOW BEEN BORN IN THE HOUSE OF DRUPADA. AND SHE IS DESTINED TO BE YOUR WIFE. THEREFORE GO TO PANCHALA AND TAKE UP YOUR RESIDENCE THERE.

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BEYOND DOUBT YOU WILL WIN HER AND MUCH HAPPINESS.
HAVING ADVISED THE PANDAVAS THUS, MY GURU TOOK HIS LEAVE OF THEM AND WENT HIS WAY.
"THEN THE PANDAVAS BID THE BRAHMANA FAREWELL, SALUTED HIM...
"...AND SET OUT.
"TURNING THEIR STEPS NORTHWARDS, LED BY ARJUNA WHO HELD A TORCH ALOFT, THEY WALKED DAY AND NIGHT TILL...


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"...THEY CAME TO THE BANKS OF THE GANGA. THERE IN THAT SECLUDED SPOT, THE KING OF THE GANDHARVAS WAS SPORTING WITH HIS WIVES IN THE WATERS OF THE RIVER.

"AND HE HEARD THEIR FOOTFALLS AS THEY CAME ALONG THE RIVERSIDE.

"WHEN THE PANDAVAS AND THEIR MOTHER CAME INTO HIS VIEW...

"...HE SHOUTED:

STAY WHERE YOU ARE! THE TWILIGHT HOURS ARE EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE YAKSHAS, THE GANDHARVAS AND THE RAKSHASAS.

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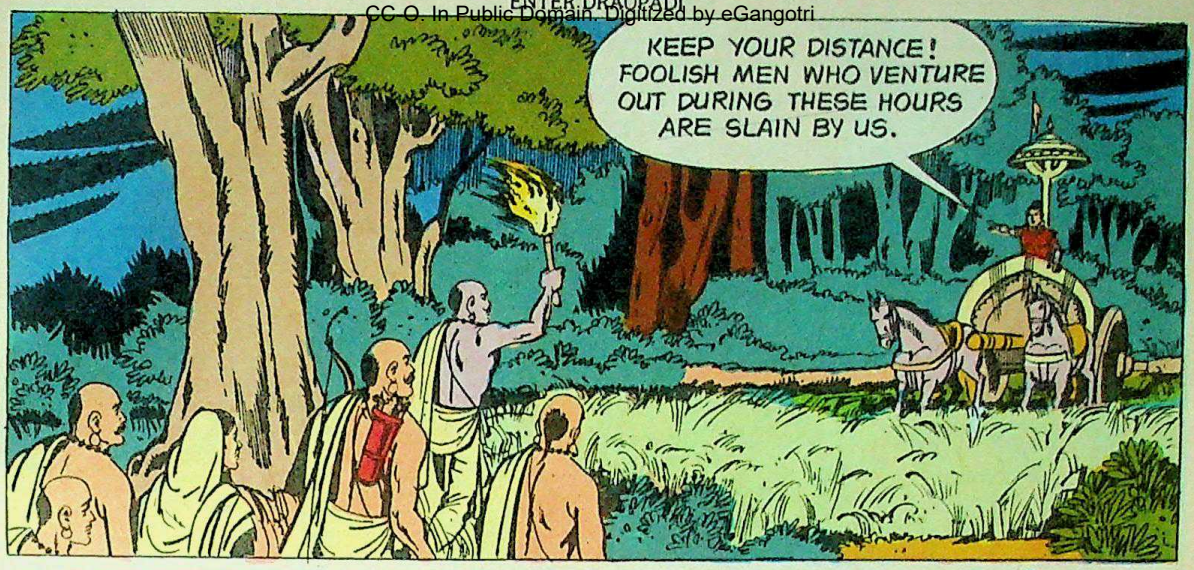
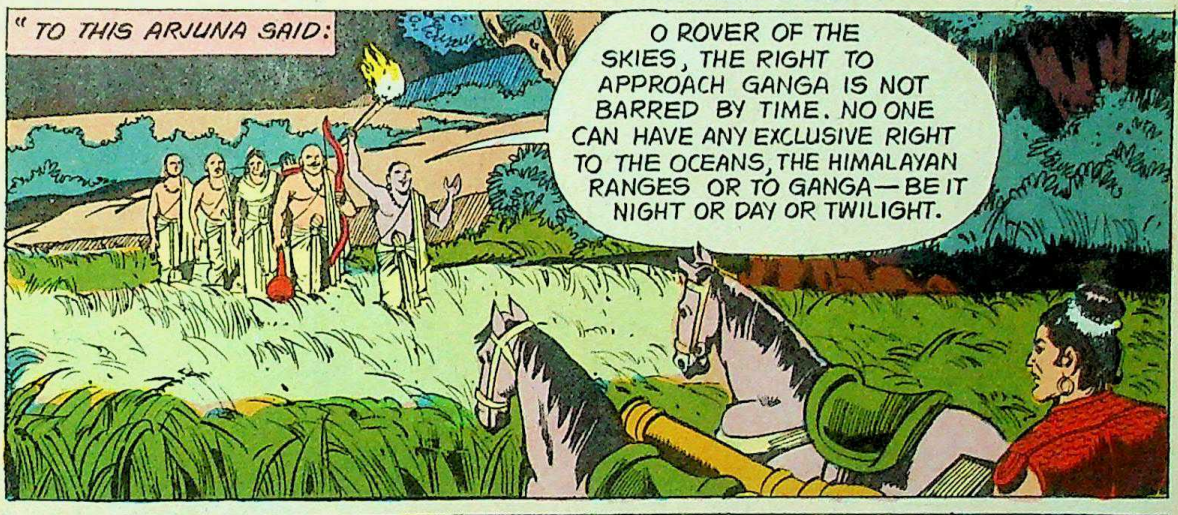
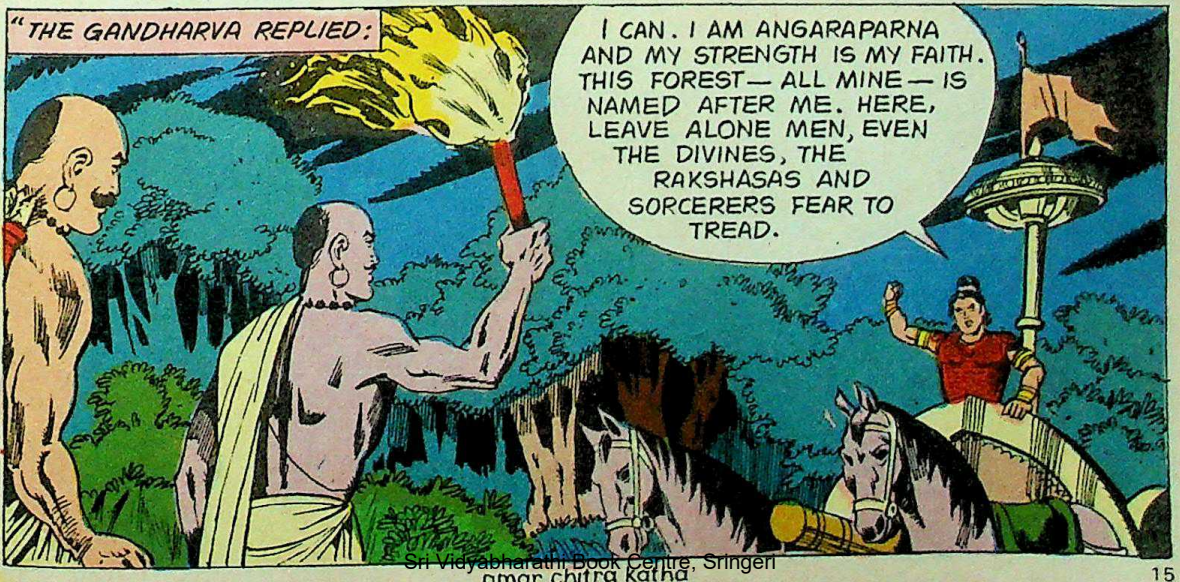




"TO THIS ARJUNA SAID:
O ROVER OF THE SKIES, THE RIGHT TO APPROACH GANGA IS NOT BARRED BY TIME. NO ONE CAN HAVE ANY EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO THE OCEANS, THE HIMALAYAN RANGES OR TO GANGA—BE IT NIGHT OR DAY OR TWILIGHT.


"THE GANDHARVA REPLIED:
I CAN. I AM ANGARAPARNA AND MY STRENGTH IS MY FAITH. THIS FOREST— ALL MINE— IS NAMED AFTER ME. HERE, LEAVE ALONE MEN, EVEN THE DIVINES, THE RAKSHASAS AND SORCERERS FEAR TO TREAD.

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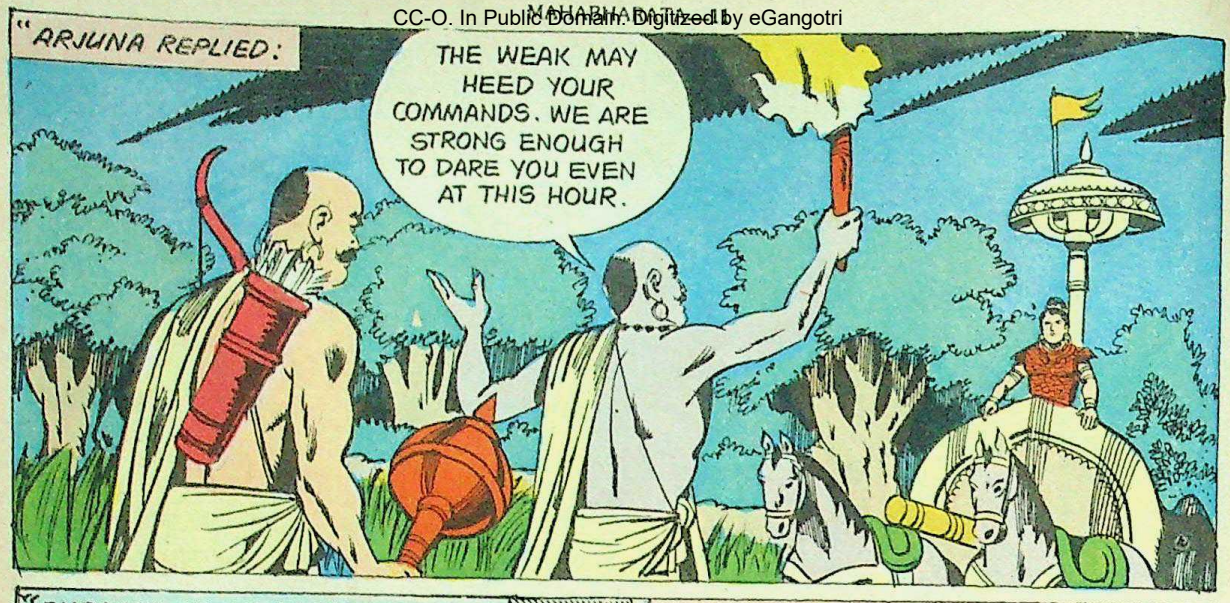


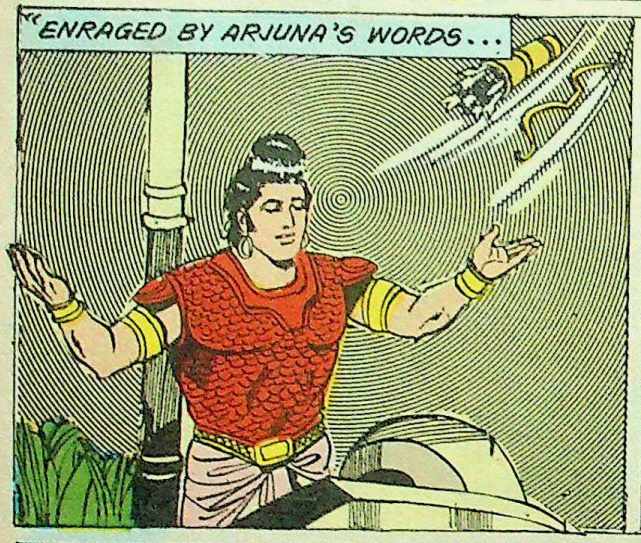


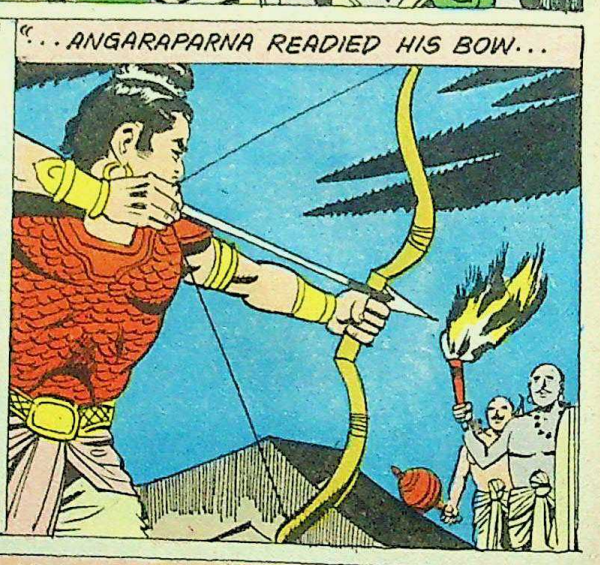

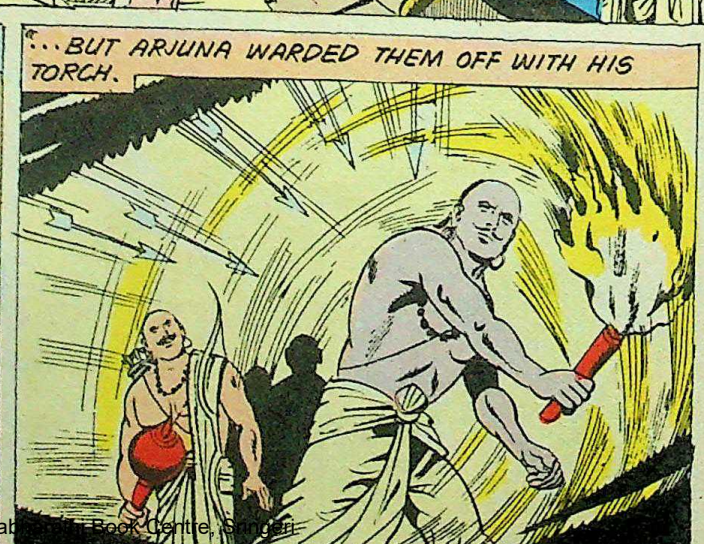


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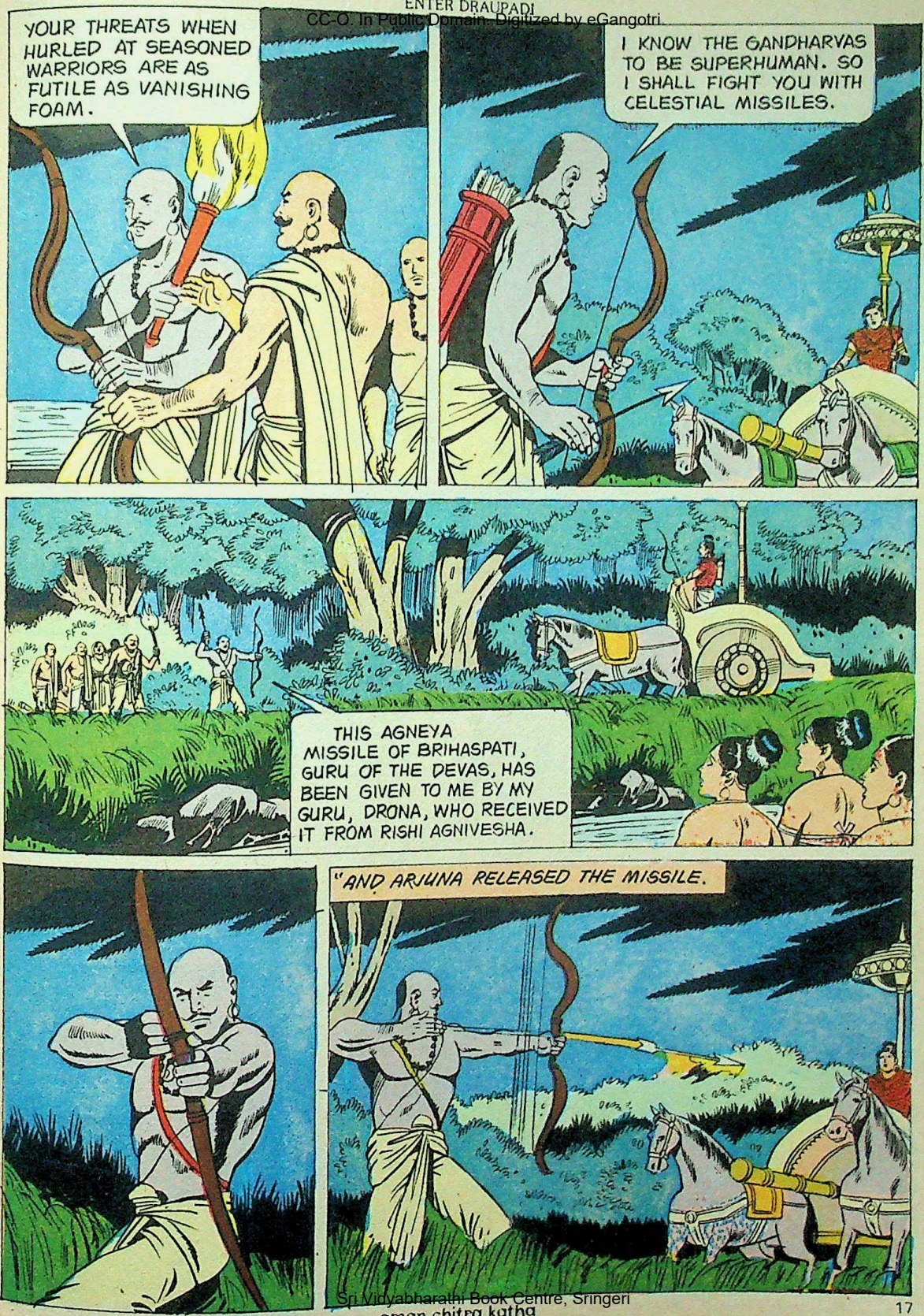
YOUR THREATS WHEN HURLED AT SEASONED WARRIORS ARE AS FUTILE AS VANISHING FOAM.
I KNOW THE GANDHARVAS TO BE SUPERHUMAN. SO I SHALL FIGHT YOU WITH CELESTIAL MISSILES.
THIS AGNEYA MISSILE OF BRIHASPATI, GURU OF THE DEVAS, HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME BY MY GURU, DRONA, WHO RECEIVED IT FROM RISHI AGNIVESHA.
"AND ARJUNA RELEASED THE MISSILE.

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"THE BLAZING MISSILE BURNT DOWN THE GANDHARVA'S CHARIOT AND STUNNED BY THE FORCE OF THAT WEAPON...
"...HE FELL HEADLONG FROM THE CHARIOT. AS HE FELL ARJUNA SEIZED HIM BY HIS HAIR...
"...AND DRAGGED HIM TOWARDS HIS BROTHERS.
"KUMBHEENASI, THE GANDHARVA'S WIFE, ALL ANXIOUS TO SAVE HER HUSBAND'S LIFE, RAN TOWARDS YUDHISHTHIRA AND PLEADED:
SAVE ME, O NOBLE ONE. SAVE MY HUSBAND AND SAVE ME. I AM KUMBHEENASI.

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"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID TO ARJUNA:
DEAR BROTHER, RELEASE HIM. WHO WOULD SLAY A FOE DEFEATED, HUMILIATED AND IN NEED OF THE PROTECTION OF A WOMAN?
"THEN ARJUNA SAID TO THE GANDHARVA:
YUDHISHTHIRA, THE KING OF THE KURUS, HAS SAVED YOU. GO HENCE WITH YOUR LIFE, ANGARAPARNA.
"WHEN ADDRESSED THUS, THE GANDHARVA SAID:
I RENOUNCE THE NAME OF ANGARAPARNA*. AFTER MY DEFEAT, I HAVE NO CLAIM TO THAT BOASTFUL NAME.
I HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE IN MY ENCOUNTER WITH YOU, THE WIELDER OF CELESTIAL WEAPONS, O ARJUNA.

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* THE ONE WITH THE SCORCHING VEHICLE

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AND NOW I SHALL IMPART TO YOU THE SECRET LORE OF THE GANDHARVAS FOR MAGICAL POWERS. THE SECRET SCIENCE IS CALLED CHAKSHUSHI. IT ENABLES ONE TO PERCEIVE WHAT ONE DESIRES TO SEE, IN ALL THE THREE WORLDS.
IT IS THIS PERCEPTION THAT ELEVATES US TO THE LEVEL OF THE CELESTIALS, SUPERIOR TO THE MORTALS.
WHAT PROSPERITY DOES HE NOT DESERVE WHOSE MERCY SPARES THE LIFE OF A VANQUISHED FOE!

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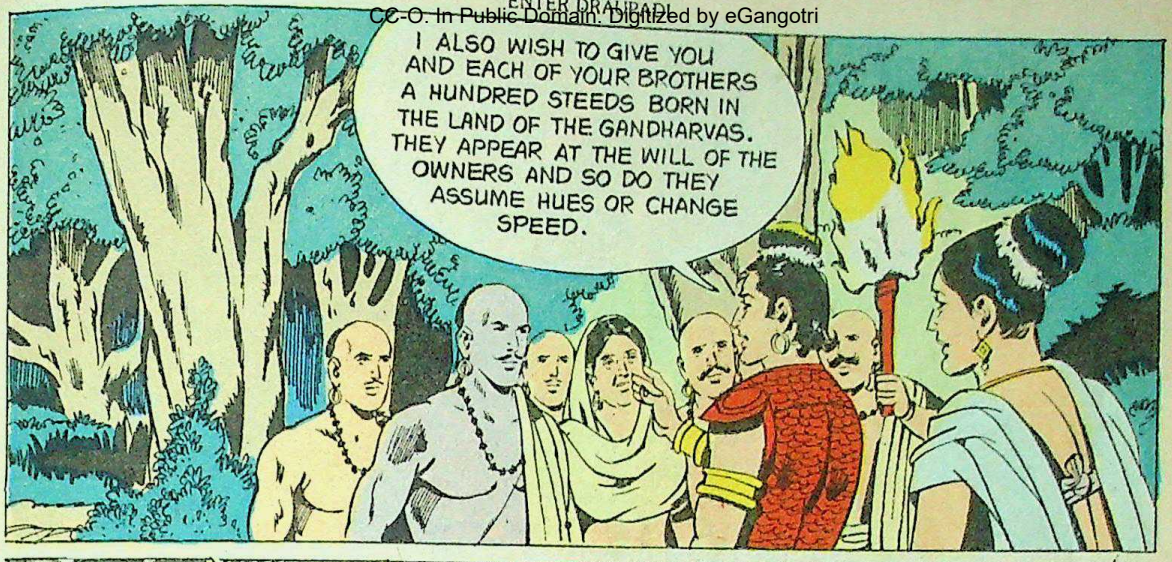
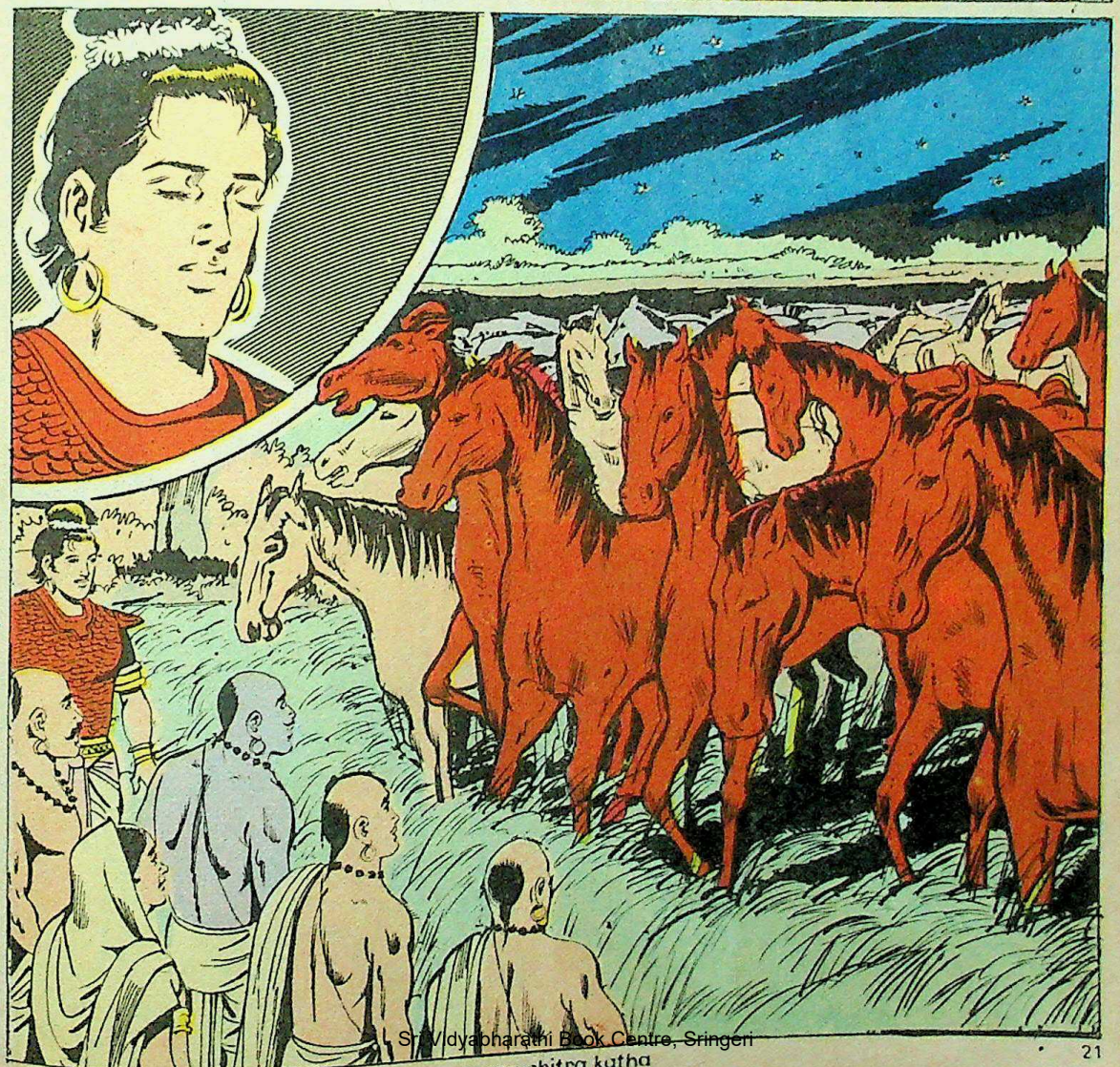

I ALSO WISH TO GIVE YOU AND EACH OF YOUR BROTHERS A HUNDRED STEEDS BORN IN THE LAND OF THE GANDHARVAS. THEY APPEAR AT THE WILL OF THE OWNERS AND SO DO THEY ASSUME HUES OR CHANGE SPEED.



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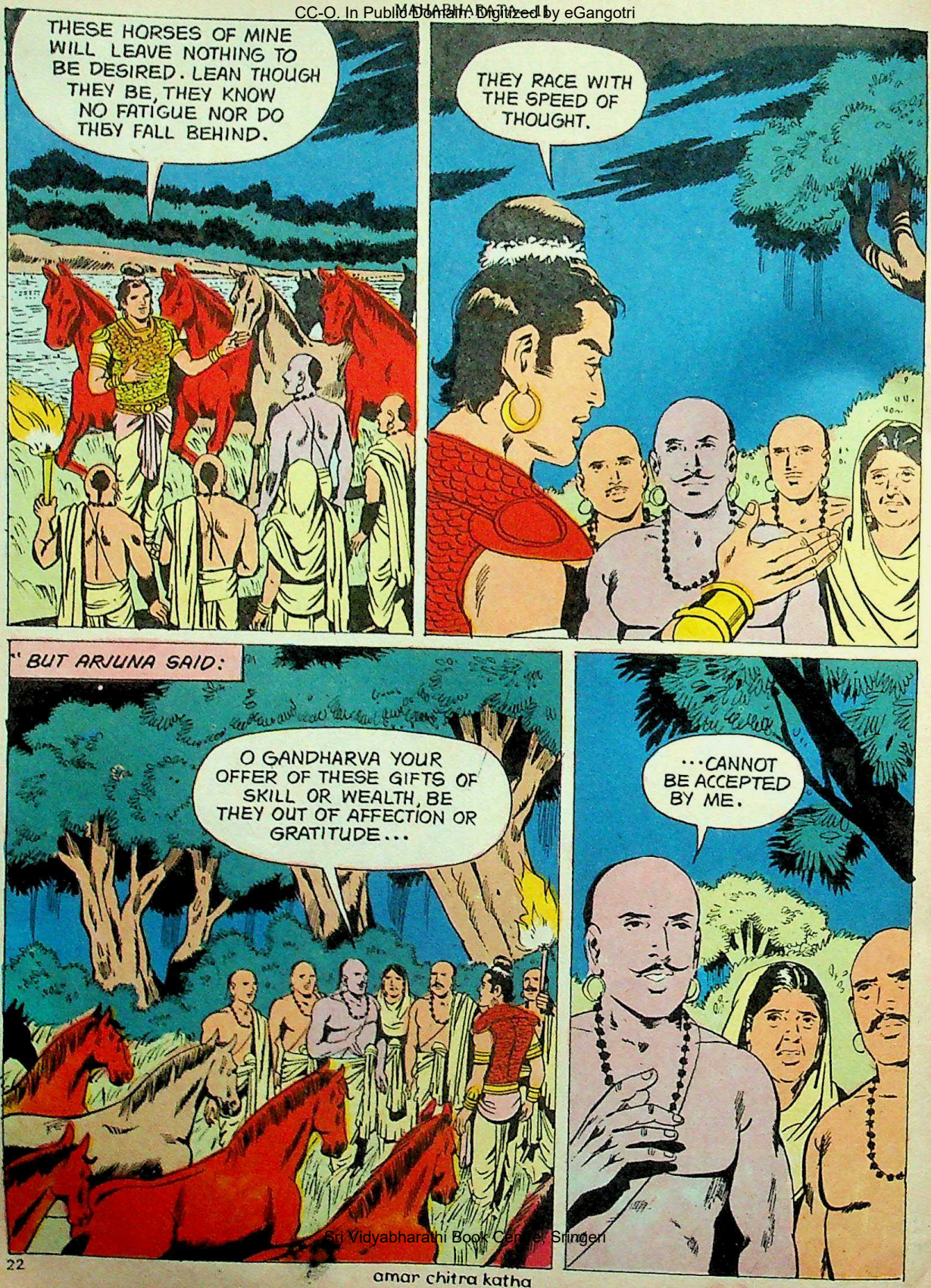
THESE HORSES OF MINE WILL LEAVE NOTHING TO BE DESIRED. LEAN THOUGH THEY BE, THEY KNOW NO FATIGUE NOR DO THEY FALL BEHIND.
THEY RACE WITH THE SPEED OF THOUGHT.
"BUT ARJUNA SAID:
O GANDHARVA YOUR OFFER OF THESE GIFTS OF SKILL OR WEALTH, BE THEY OUT OF AFFECTION OR GRATITUDE...
...CANNOT BE ACCEPTED BY ME.

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"THE GANDHARVA REPLIED:
A MEETING WITH A GREAT MAN IS ALWAYS A SOURCE OF GREAT JOY. OVERWHELMED BY WHAT YOU HAVE GIVEN ME, I WISH TO GIVE YOU MY SCIENCE.
TO CONFORM TO PROPRIETY, HOWEVER, I WILL RECEIVE FROM YOU THE AGNEYA MISSILE.
"THEN ARJUNA SAID:
I SHALL GIVE YOU THE MISSILE AND ACCEPT YOUR HORSES.
LET US REMAIN FRIENDS FOREVER.
O VIRTUOUS FRIEND, WE ARE SCHOLARS AND WE ARE WARRIORS. WHY DID YOU ATTACK US?

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THE GANDHARVA REPLIED:
NO MAN ESTEEMED FOR HIS MIGHT WILL SUFFER A SLIGHT IN THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN AND...
...YOU WANDER WITHOUT RITES AND WITHOUT RITUALS AND EVEN WITHOUT PRIESTS TO GUIDE YOU.
A KING SHOULD ALWAYS SELECT A CONSUMMATE PRIEST TO ACQUIRE WHAT HE SHOULD, AND TO PROTECT HIS ACQUISITIONS.
O TAPATYA, THAT BRAHMANA SHOULD BE INSTALLED AS PRIEST WHO IS A VEDIC SCHOLAR, WHO IS BLAMELESS, TRUTHFUL, DUTIFUL AND VIRTUOUS.

Shri Vasudevanand Saraswati Mahavidyalaya, Surat

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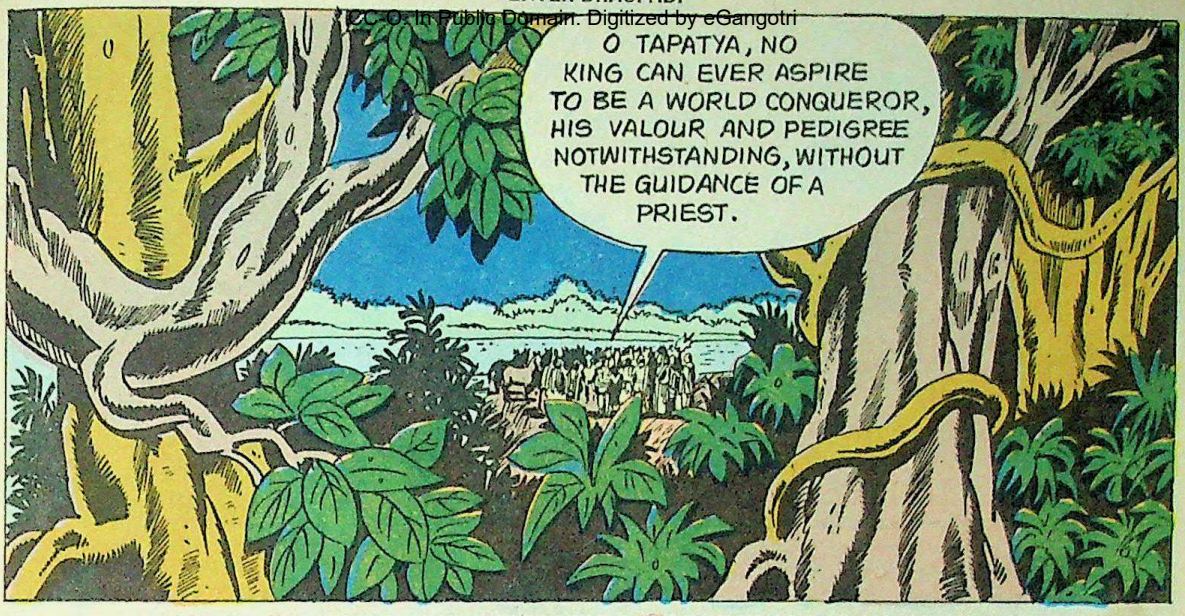
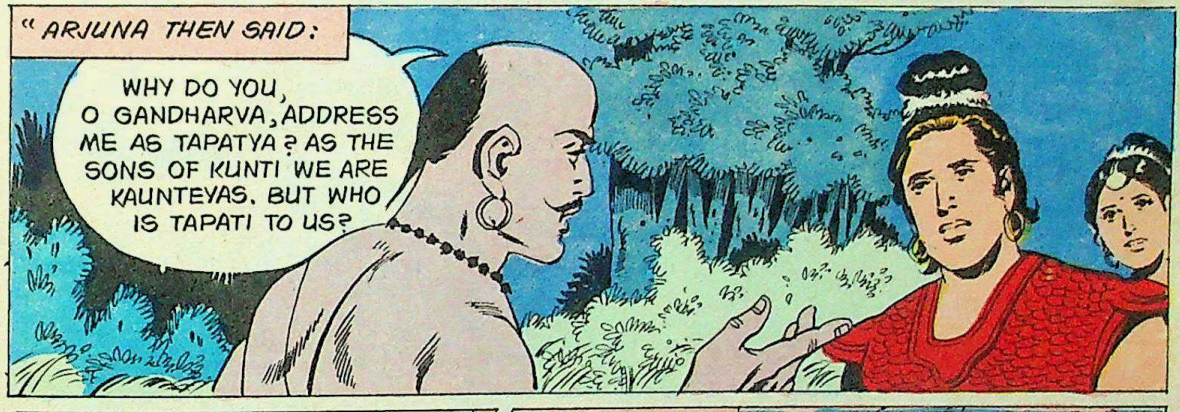
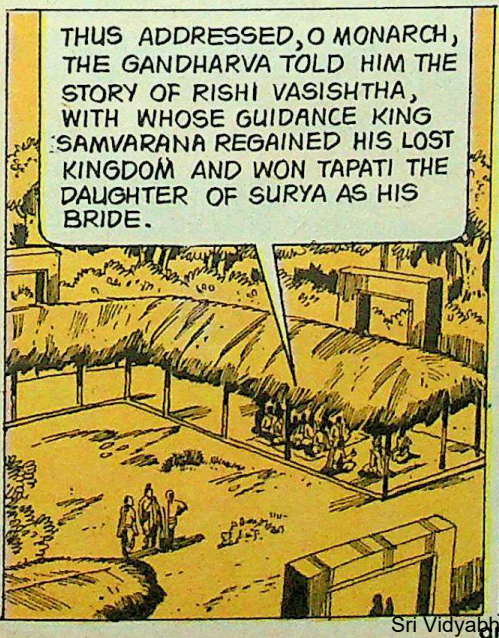
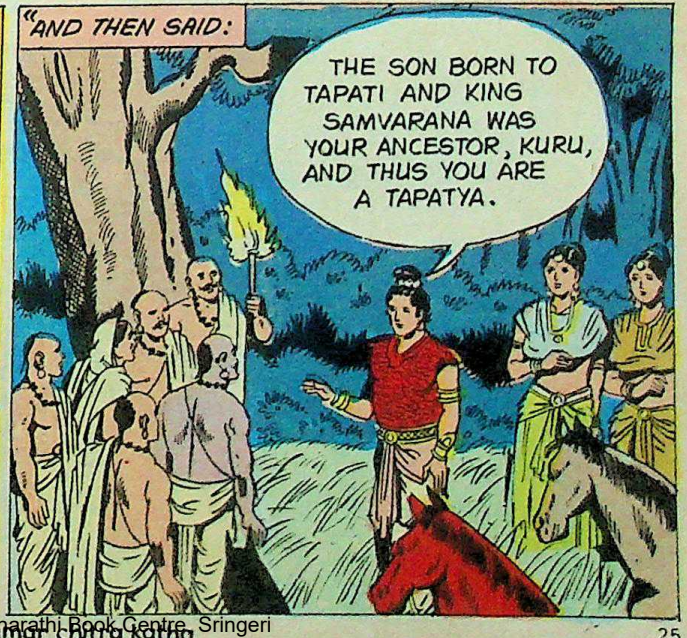

O TAPATYA, NO KING CAN EVER ASPIRE TO BE A WORLD CONQUEROR, HIS VALOUR AND PEDIGREE NOTWITHSTANDING, WITHOUT THE GUIDANCE OF A PRIEST.





THUS ADDRESSED, O MONARCH, THE GANDHARVA TOLD HIM THE STORY OF RISHI VASISHTHA, WITH WHOSE GUIDANCE KING SAMVARANA REGAINED HIS LOST KINGDOM AND WON TAPATI THE DAUGHTER OF SURYA AS HIS BRIDE.





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"THEN ARJUNA ASKED:
O GANDHARVA, WITH YOUR VAST KNOWLEDGE, YOU TELL US WHICH BRAHMANA IS TO BE CHOSEN AS OUR PRIEST.
THE GANDHARVA REPLIED:
DHOUMYA WHO PRACTISES PENANCES IN THIS FOREST IS TO BE YOUR PRIEST.
THEN, PLEASED AT THE TURN OF EVENTS, ARJUNA GAVE THE SECRET OF THE AGNEYA MISSILE TO THE GANDHARVA IN ALL PROPRIETY...
"...AND SAID:
O NOBLE GANDHARVA, LET THESE HORSES BE WITH YOU. WE SHALL TAKE THEM IN THE TIME OF NEED.

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"THEN THE PANDAVAS WENT TO THE ASHRAMA OF DHOUMYA WHO WELCOMED THEM WITH WILD FRUITS AND ROOTS...
"...AND CONSENTED TO BECOME THEIR PRIEST.
WITH DHOUMYA AS THEIR PRIEST, THE PANDAVAS REGARDED THEIR KINGSHIP AND THEIR KINGDOM AS ALREADY REGAINED, AND THE DAUGHTER OF PANCHALA ALREADY WON IN THE SWAYAMVARA.
AND THAT BRAHMANA DISCERNING THE INTELLIGENCE, VALOUR AND STEADFASTNESS OF THE SONS OF KUNTI, AKIN TO THAT OF THE IMMORTALS, REGARDED THEM AS ALREADY REINSTATED AS SOVEREIGN KINGS BY THEIR OWN VIRTUES.

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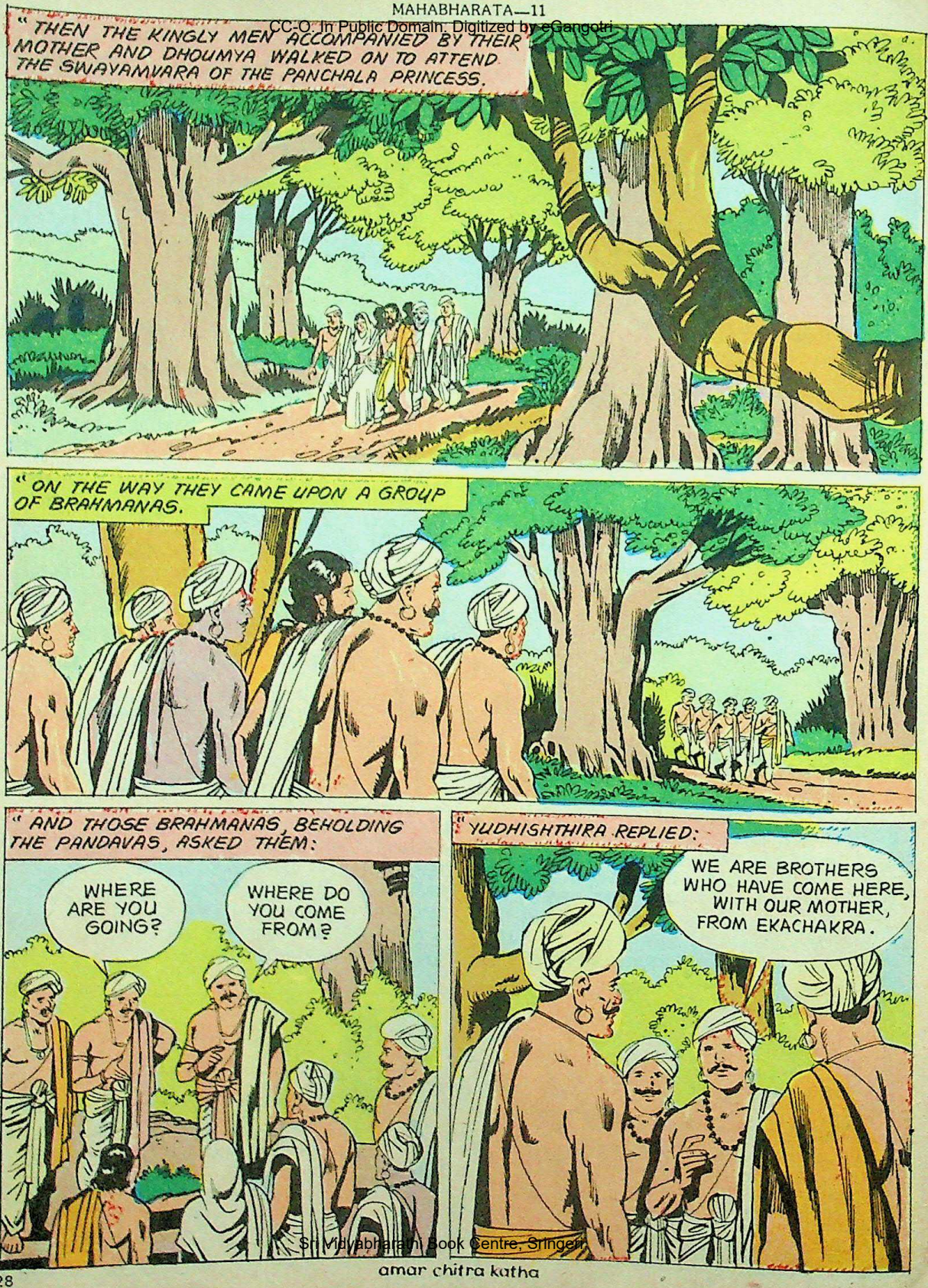
"THEN THE KINGLY MEN ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR MOTHER AND DHOUMYA WALKED ON TO ATTEND THE SWAYAMVARA OF THE PANCHALA PRINCESS.
"ON THE WAY THEY CAME UPON A GROUP OF BRAHMANAS.
"AND THOSE BRAHMANAS, BEHOLDING THE PANDAVAS, ASKED THEM:
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?
YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED:
WE ARE BROTHERS WHO HAVE COME HERE, WITH OUR MOTHER, FROM EKACHAKRA.

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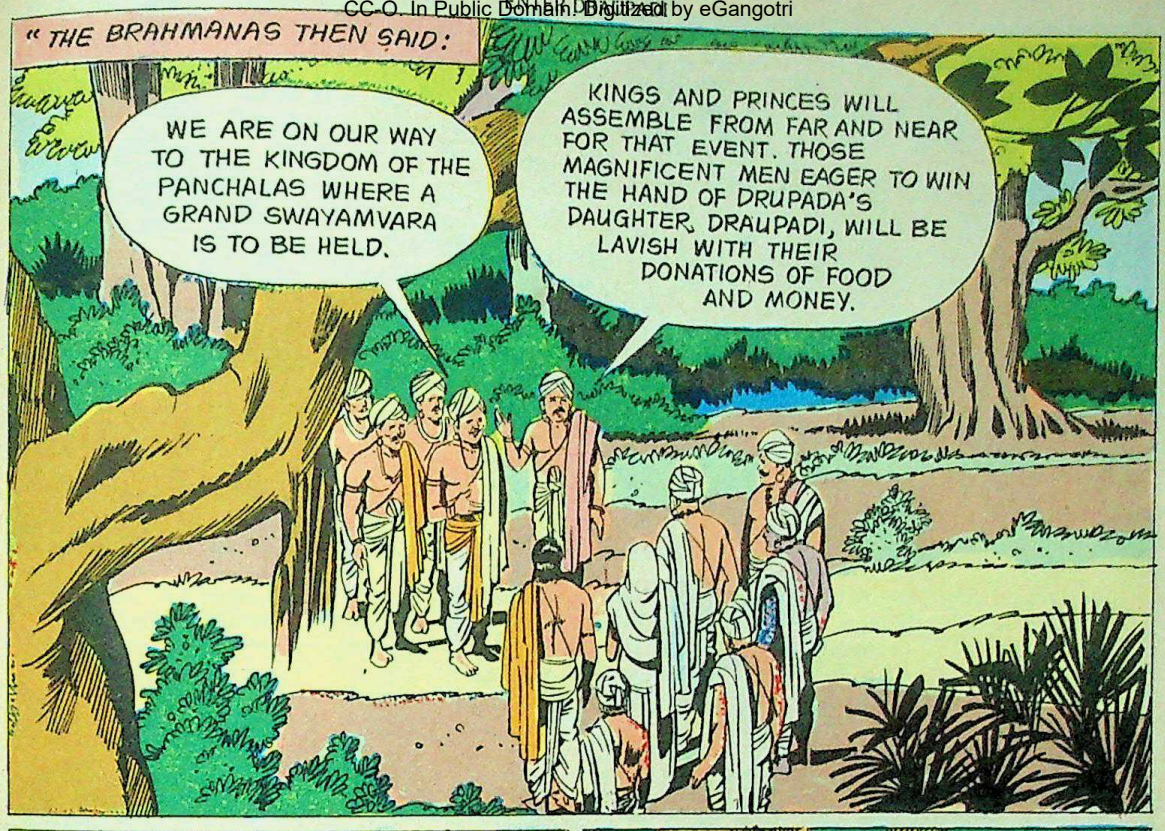
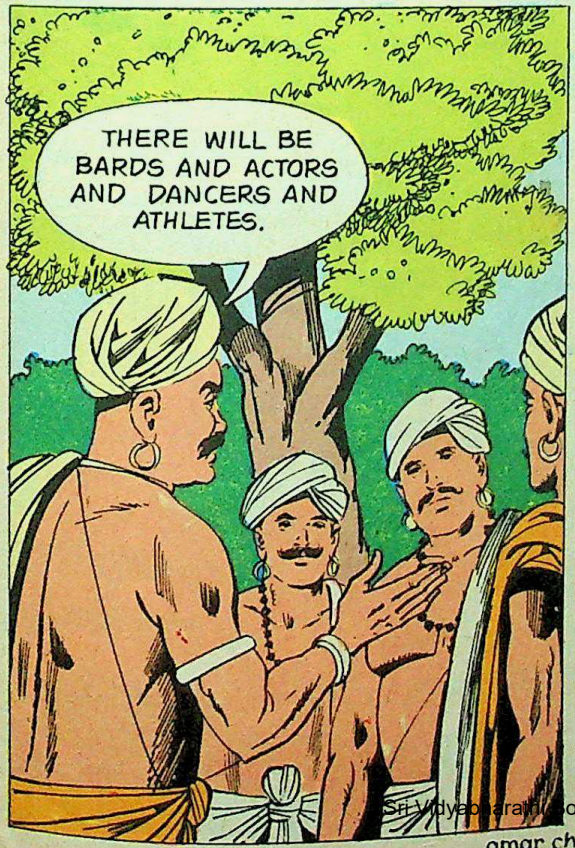
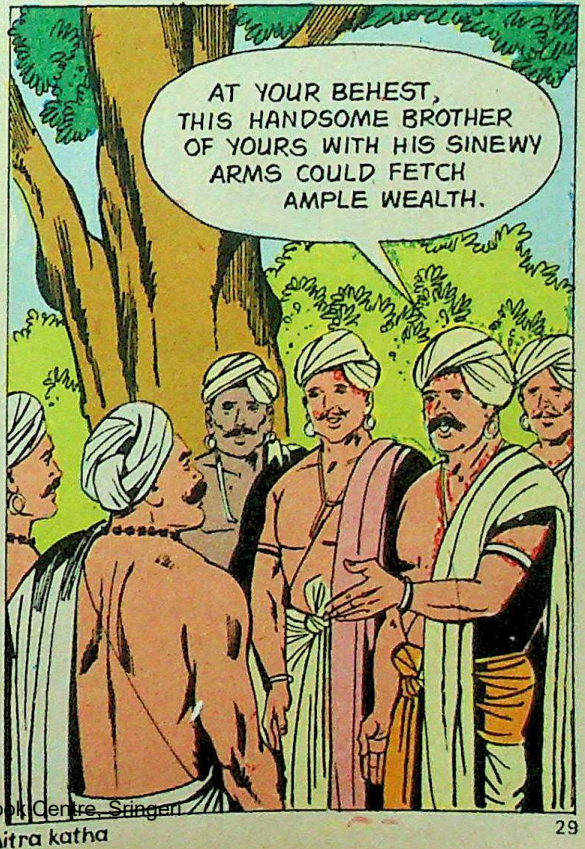

"THE BRAHMANAS THEN SAID:
WE ARE ON OUR WAY TO THE KINGDOM OF THE PANCHALAS WHERE A GRAND SWAYAMVARA IS TO BE HELD.
KINGS AND PRINCES WILL ASSEMBLE FROM FAR AND NEAR FOR THAT EVENT. THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN EAGER TO WIN THE HAND OF DRUPADA'S DAUGHTER, DRAUPADI, WILL BE LAVISH WITH THEIR DONATIONS OF FOOD AND MONEY.

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COME WITH US. ENJOY THE SIGHTS AND COLLECT THE GIFTS AND COME BACK.

WHO KNOWS? DRAUPADI MIGHT CHOOSE THE BEST OF YOU — ALL HANDSOME LIKE THE CELESTIALS.

"HEARING THESE WORDS, YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED:

ALL OF US SHALL GO WITH YOU TO THE SWAYAMVARA.

"AND THE PANDAVAS THEN WALKED ON TOWARDS THE LAND OF THE SOUTHERN PANCHALAS RULED BY DRUPADA.

"RESTING NOW AND THEN IN FOREST BOWERS AND TARRYING BY THE SIDE OF LAKES...

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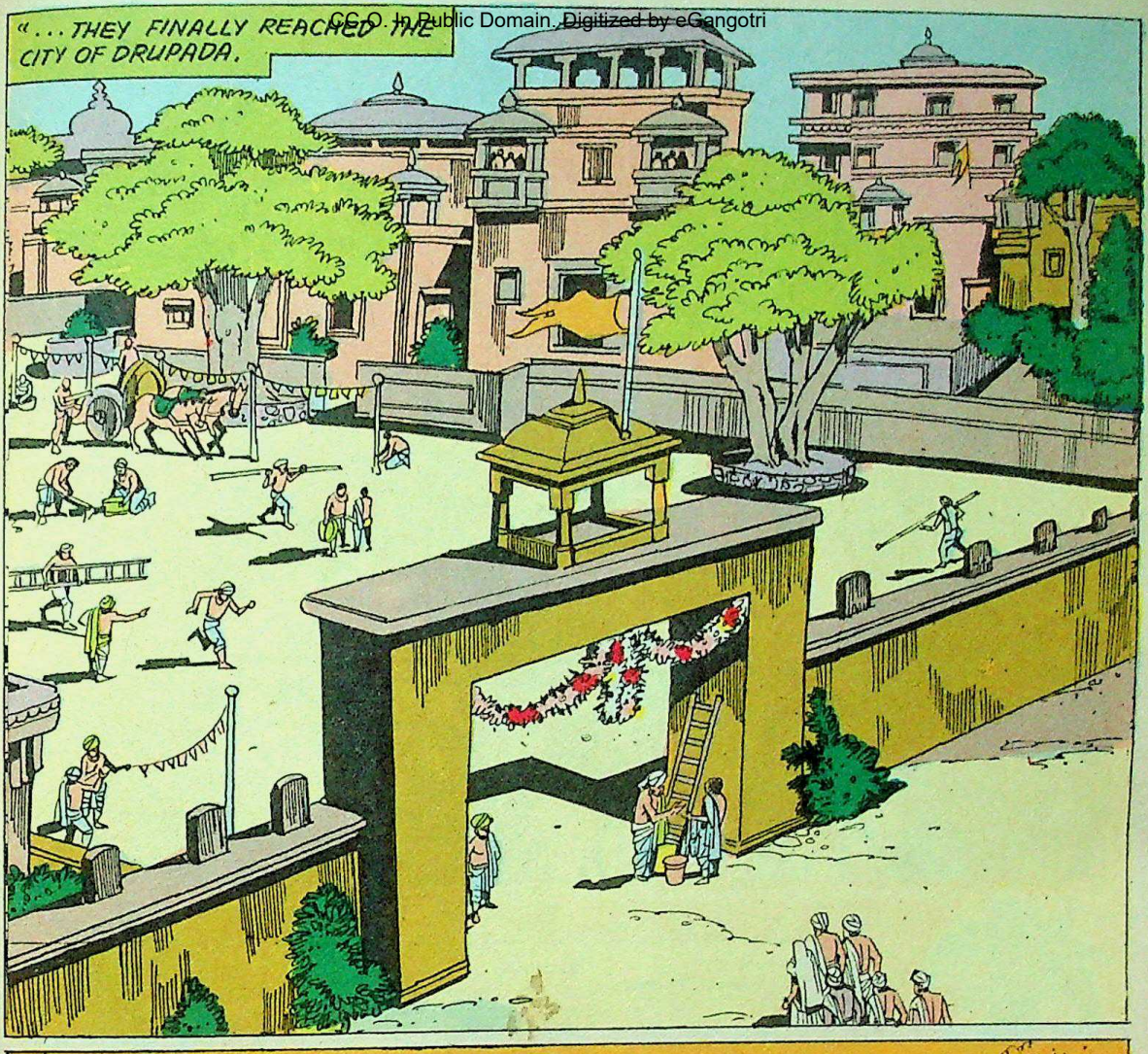

AFTER SEEING THE CITY AND ITS RAMPARTS, THE PANDAVAS TOOK THEIR RESIDENCE IN THE HOUSE OF A POTTER AND LIVED LIKE MENDICANTS. NO ONE KNEW WHO THEY WERE.
AND THUS ENDS THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARATA.


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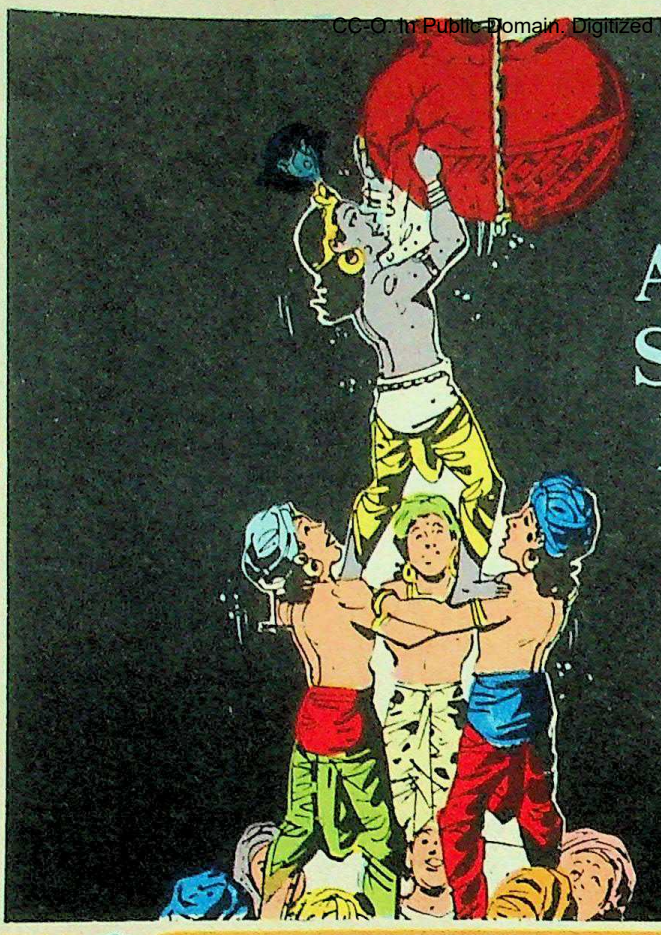

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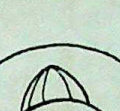

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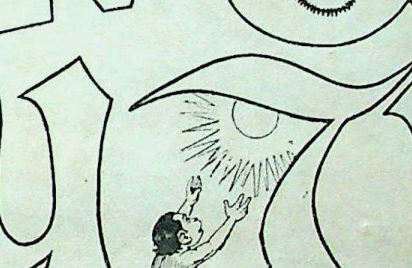

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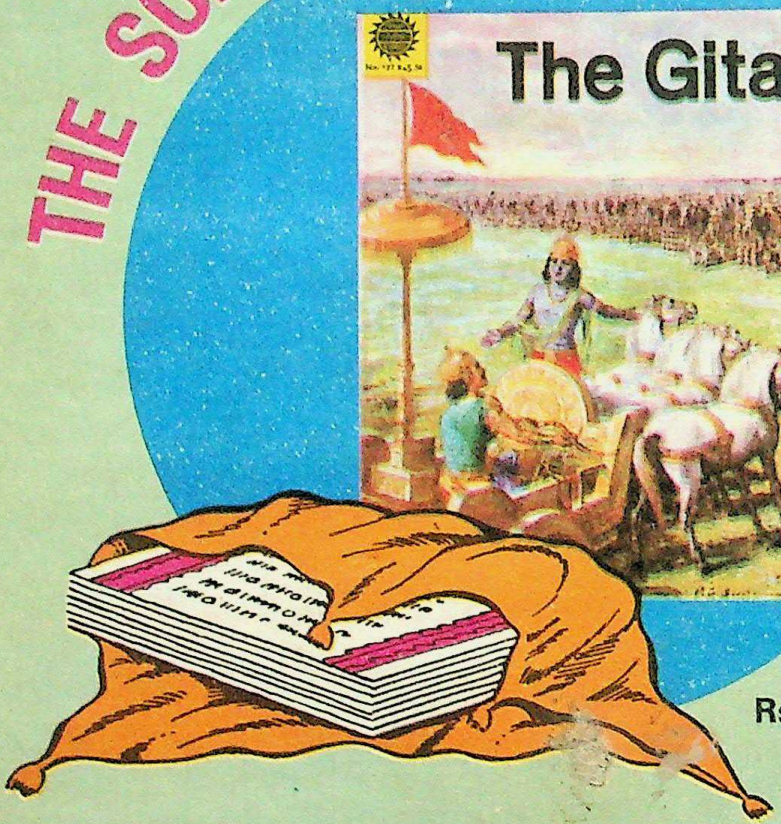


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